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SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: ITALY ON GAERC AGENDA: NO CONSENSUS FOR CROATIA
ACCESSION NEGOTIATIONS START

REF: STATE 39909

Classified By: POL MINISTER COUNSELOR TOM COUNTRYMAN. REASON:1.5 (B)(D)
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Croatia/ICTY Conditionality

11. (C) MFA EU-CFSP Director Luigi Mattiolo told poloff that no Member States expect Ministers to approve a start date for Croatian accession talks at the March 16 GAERC. He predicted Ministers would urge completion of the EU's own bureaucratic preparations for negotiations to start, while underlining to Zagreb that it has not kept its part of the bargain struck at the December 2004 Council, i.e. deliver Gotovina to The Hague. Mattiolo hoped that, coupled with statements recognizing developments in other parts of the region (peaceful Haradinaj resignation, Bosnia/Serb cooperation with ICTY), the GAERC conclusions would spur Zagreb to move faster on its ICTY obligations. Mattiolo was unsure on the way ahead for Croatia, but underlined that Italy saw no value in establishing a future date or time frame to start negotiations. "The Croatians know what they must do, and it is not time dependent."

Russia/Georgia Border Monitoring

12. (C) Mattiolo said the EU strategy at the moment would be to reinforce the office of the recently created EU Special Representative for the Caucasus, to include the 6 trainers mentioned in reftel. He underlined that this was an "interim step" in response to Russian opposition to continued operation of the OSCE BMO. Italy would not necessarily oppose a further reinforcement of the SREP or a monitoring mission as suggested reftel, but only after a period of "assessment" by the SREP. Mattiolo noted that consensus for an EU mission to replace the OSCE BMO "is nowhere in sight" in Brussels. Embassy raised this also with FM Fini, s deputy chief of cabinet and will follow up with Poldir Terzi on March 15.

Middle East

13. (C) As this was the first GAERC after the London conference, Ministers would reinforce support for the IC's role in the peace process and underscore the need for enhanced Quartet coordination on the Roadmap. Mattiolo said that FM Fini would likely make reference to bilateral Italian initiatives, such as the ongoing Italian government assessment for Carabinieri training for Palestinian security personnel.

Lebanon

14. (C) Mattiolo said that Syrian government signals on withdrawal from Lebanon were hopeful, but nonetheless Italy would support a strong reference in the GAERC conclusions urging Damascus to implement as quickly as possible UNSCR 1559, and IC support for UN Envoy Larsen. Mattiolo said that Ministers will discuss a monitoring mission and assistance for election institution building in the run-up to the April 14 parliamentary vote. Mattiolo repeated the Italian view that Hizballah designation was unlikely any time soon. A number of Member States feel that the IC must proceed carefully, given regional implications for any such action.

15. (C) Separately, MFA Eastern Med office director Luca Ferrari told us that in the drafting of the GAERC conclusions in Brussels, Italy had been isolated when it had insisted that The conclusions refer not only to Syrian withdrawal from Lebanon, but also to UNSCR 1559, s other requirement: the Disarmament of the militias. The most the Italians were able to Get from their colleagues was a demand for implementation of

&in its entirety.8

Sudan

16. (C) Italy fully supports establishing a UN PKO in coordination with ongoing African Union efforts. Mattiolo concurred with reftel points concerning the need to prosecute those having violated international human rights law. He said that his own government's and EU's views on an alternative to using the ICC to prosecute such offenders was "evolving," and would likely become clearer once the UNSC reached a decision.

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